



MYIAGRA PLUMBEA: Vig. & Horsf.

J. Gould and H. C. Richter del. et lith.

Hallman del. & Walton Imp.

MYIÄGRA PLUMBEA, *Vig. and Horsf.*

Plumbeous Fly-catcher.

Myiägra plumbea, Vig. and Horsf. in Linn. Trans., vol. xv. p. 254.—Less. Man. d'Orn., tom. i. p. 181.—Swains. Class. of Birds, vol. ii. p. 260.

A SUMMER visitant to New South Wales, where it takes up its abode on high trees bordering creeks and low valleys, and captures its insect food under the shady branches, the *Myiägra plumbea* is mostly seen in pairs, which are rather thinly dispersed over the districts forming its usual place of resort. A low whistling note, frequently uttered by the males, is, in all probability, indicative of the season of love; but whether it is also uttered at any other than the pairing and breeding time, I had no opportunities of observing. On the approach of winter it retires northwards from New South Wales, and is not to be met with there until the following August or September, the months in which spring commences in the opposite hemisphere.

It is a most active bird; in fact all its positions are characterized by great liveliness; for while in a state of comparative repose, or when not actually in pursuit of insects, it displays a constant tremulous motion of the tail, by which means its presence is often betrayed when it would otherwise remain unnoticed.

As is the case with all the other members of the genus, the sexes present considerable difference in their plumage, the female having the throat of a bright rusty red, while the throat of the male is of a rich greenish lead-colour, like the upper surface,—a style of colouring which has suggested the specific name of *plumbea*. The young males during the first year so closely assimilate in plumage to the female, that by dissection alone can they be distinguished with certainty.

New South Wales appears to be the great nursery of this species, for I never met with it either in Van Diemen's Land or in any other of the Australian colonies; where then does it go during the colder months of the year? The woods bordering the north coast are inhabited by a nearly allied but distinct species; the *M. plumbea* would not therefore be likely to pass over this country, or to find therein a resting-place among the individuals of another species. If however we consider the vast extent of Australia, and the probability that its central parts may be far more fertile than is generally supposed, it is not unlikely that the winter abode of this and numerous other birds will there be found, and that thereby the mysteriously sudden appearance and departure of many species, which are so frequently taking place, will be readily accounted for.

The nest is cup-shaped, rather deep, formed of moss and lichens and neatly lined with feathers, and is generally placed on the horizontal branch of a tree. I did not succeed in procuring the eggs.

The male has the whole of the upper surface, wings, tail and breast lead-colour, glossed with green on the head, neck and breast, and becoming gradually paler towards the extremity of the body and on the wings and tail; primaries slaty black; secondaries faintly margined with white; under surface of the wing, abdomen and under tail-coverts white; bill leaden blue, except at the extreme tip, which is black; irides and feet black.

The female has the head and back lead-colour, without the greenish gloss; wings and tail brown, fringed with bluish grey, particularly the secondaries; throat and breast rich rusty red, gradually fading into the white of the lower part of the abdomen and under tail-coverts; upper mandible black; under mandible pale blue, except at the extremity, which is black.

The Plate represents the two sexes of the natural size.